



FOI 2017-12988

**Navy Command FOI Section
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[REDACTED] 5 October 2018

Dear [REDACTED]

Release of Information

Further to our letter of 28 September 2018, I am now able to respond in full to your request for the following information:

- ‘1. The cumulative number of OPDEFs across the surface fleet (not URNU & RFA), broken down by OPDEF category (A, B and C) and class of vessel, for each month, for the past five years.
2. The total number of equipment concessions given to the surface fleet each month for the past five years.
3. The cumulative number of OPDEFs across the submarine fleet, broken down by OPDEF category (A, B and C) and class of submarine, for each month, for the past five years.
4. The total number of equipment concessions given to the submarine fleet, listed against T, A and V classes, each month for the past five years
5. Please can you also provide me with a copy of a recent report written by Cdr Grey of the Submarine Service and delivered to Rear Admiral Submarines into the factors contributing to large numbers of submariners leaving the service.’

Your enquiry is being treated as a request for information under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act 2000.

As explained in our interim reply of 31 January 2018, a search was completed within the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and it was confirmed that some information held may have fallen within the scope of the qualified exemptions under Section 26(1)(b) (Defence), Section 27 (International Relations) and Section 43(2) (Commercial Interests) of the FOI Act. As these exemptions are qualified it was necessary to conduct Public Interest Tests (PITs) to determine whether the information would prejudice the capability, effectiveness or security

of our Armed Forces and/or the UK's international relationships and/or the commercial interests of any person. After further consideration of the information identified as potentially within scope of your request, the Department has concluded that, for the reasons outlined below, some of the information is being withheld under the exemptions at Sections 26(1)(b), 27(1)(a) and 43(2) of the FOI Act.

Taking parts one to four of your request first, I can confirm that this information is being withheld in its entirety as it is considered to fall within the scope of the exemptions at s26(1)(b) and s43(2) of the Act.

Under s26(1)(b) information is exempt if its disclosure under the Act would, or would be likely to, prejudice the capability, effectiveness or security of any relevant forces. It is accepted that there is a public interest in the safety and effectiveness of our Armed Forces and the full release of information would demonstrate the MOD's commitment to openness and transparency. However, there is also a compelling interest in ensuring that information that could release details of the operational state of the Royal Navy's (RN) Fleet is not released into the public domain where it could be exploited by potential adversaries and put at risk the capability and effectiveness of our RN forces.

Section 43(2) of the FOI Act provides that information is exempt if its disclosure under the Act would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of any person (including the public authority holding it). There is a very strong public interest in safeguarding sensitive information which, if disclosed, would be likely to weaken the Department's relationship and interests with its industry partners and inhibit their willingness to enter into any future contractual agreements

On balance, it is considered that the public interest lies in withholding this information, in the interests of maintaining the safety and/or effectiveness of our forces engaged in Defence activities and the UK's relationships and interests with its industry partners.

Turning to part five of your request, please find enclosed a copy of the summary and recommendations of the report to which you refer. As you will see, some of the information within this document and the remainder of the report has been withheld under the qualified exemptions at Sections 26(1)(b), 27(1)(a) and 43(2) of the FOI Act. Further information is also being withheld under the absolute exemption at Section 40(2) (Personal Data).

As explained above, there is a compelling interest in ensuring information that could compromise the operational state of the RN's Fleet is not released into the public domain where it could be exploited by potential adversaries and put at risk the capability and effectiveness of our RN forces. Some of the information may also, if disclosed, impact negatively on, or prejudice, the UK's relationships and interests with its industry partners.

Section 27(1)(a) of the FOI Act applies to information that, if disclosed would, or would be likely to, prejudice the interests of the UK abroad or the promotion or protection by the UK of its interests abroad. While release would further public understanding of the UK's wider international co-operation, disclosure of this information could weaken the UK's relationship and Defence interests with its international partners involved with the deterrent.

As the information was designed for internal purposes and not intended for public distribution, some of the information contained within the enclosed documentation has been redacted to remove any personal information in accordance with Section 40(2) of the FOI Act. Section 40(2) applies to personal data relating to third parties. The release of personal

information relating to other individuals would contravene the principles of the Data Protection Act 2018.

If you have any queries regarding the content of this letter, please contact this office in the first instance.

If you wish to complain about the handling of your request, or the content of this response, you can request an independent internal review by contacting the Information Rights Compliance team, Ground Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail CIO-FOI-IR@mod.gov.uk). Please note that any request for an internal review should be made within 40 working days of the date of this response.

If you remain dissatisfied following an internal review, you may raise your complaint directly to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not normally investigate your case until the MOD internal review process has been completed. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website at <https://ico.org.uk/>.

Yours sincerely

Navy Command Secretariat – FOI Section

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Annex C to
MP/PI/N1_Study
Dated [REDACTED]

HIGHLIGHTED ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM [REDACTED] N1 STUDY

The recommendations included in this Annex are by no means a list of actions that should be taken. It would be unrealistic to enact all of the recommendations posed, however they should present food for thought and perhaps give rise to feasibility studies in various combinations, to assess how life for Service personnel, and in particular Submariners, can be improved.

Throughout this study it has been highly apparent that there are key points of concern in the minds of Service personnel and areas where improvement can be made. The perceptible negativity of those who participated in this survey is, however, misleading. The underlying theme of this survey is positive and must be seen as such.

Whilst much of the garnered data might appear negative at first glance, the actual, overarching notes are distinctly positive. Morale is high onboard [REDACTED] and many of the Ship's Company are exceptionally proud to be Submariners. Critically, although issues such as shore support, manning levels and work/life balance are being raised, these are considerable factors that draw to one conclusion. Yes, there are problems, however, the overarching focus and objective of our people remains in getting submarines to sea, doing their jobs and delivering the mission.

Work/Life Balance

[REDACTED]

An examination of opinions on work/life balance was one of the key aims of the survey and the results showed a demonstrable trend of dissatisfaction in this area. Particular concerns were highlighted around the extent of duties alongside, [REDACTED]. A significant number of personnel remarked that efforts to improve the job can no longer be about quick monetary solutions, but must instead focus on long-term stability, family and career benefits.

Recommendations

- a. Stand up sacrosanct block leave periods after [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
- b. [REDACTED]
- c. Do not treat leave periods as a disposable commodity or something to be taken away as a punishment.
- d. Improve the manning and materiel support to [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
- e. Minimise secondary duty requirements when alongside by utilising shore personnel and contractors more effectively.

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- f. Do not count career courses as harmony time. Too often these are in COLLINGWOOD or SULTAN, hundreds of miles from where personnel live.

Manpower

[REDACTED]

It was noted during the study that a considerable number of issues raised are directly linked to manpower issues within the Naval Service, such as the work/life balance and retention rates.

[REDACTED] This was seen as a large aspect of uncertainty and a factor that prevents people from looking to remain in the Service, as they see manning as unsustainable and impacting negatively upon the career that was outlined to them.

Recommendations

- a. Ensure early engagement with recruits to make them fully aware of all career options available to them and are truly exposed to their future role, reducing the chances of early termination.
- b. Conduct full studies into why certain sectors of personnel are increasingly looking to leave the Naval Service e.g. [REDACTED]
- c. Outline a full future manning plan to reassure existing personnel.
- d. Advertise the Royal Navy as the cutting edge fighting force it is, rather than poorly produced documentaries, whilst looking to boost recruitment in schools and colleges through personnel who actively volunteer to give presentations.

Career and Branch Management

[REDACTED]

The general opinion put forward by the survey is that the outputs of both branch and career management are generally poor, with views on branch management being significantly more negative. Reasons for this outlook were centred again around sea/shore ratios, engagement with Career Managers and the retention of downgraded personnel who were unfit for sea.

Recommendations

- a. Increase the numbers of available shore billets through continued programmes to reinstate military posts given over to contractors.

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- b. Examine drafting patterns further and enforce separated service limits to ensure the same personnel are not always going to sea. Simultaneously be more robust in getting personnel to sea, even when they threaten to leave.
- c. Open up non-sea going support billets attached to afloat units to retain currency of experience and ease pressure on front line personnel.
- d. [REDACTED]
- e. Improve opportunities for accreditation from professional training.
- f. Conduct a study into whether Junior Rates should have shorter draft lengths, similar to Senior Rates and Officers, to help reduce burn out rates.
- g. Decrease the PFS-mandated limit on time between career interviews to two years.
- h. Improve the level of information given to personnel on branch and career futures, through more regular 'Branch Roadshows' and briefings.
- i. Provide a full outline of the long term [REDACTED] This must include details of conversion courses and a full review of Terms of Reference.
- j. Avoid adverse effects on watchbills by assigning personnel to submarines of a similar class. This avoids the individual having to re-qualify BSQ and thus makes them immediately employable to the platform.
- k. Remove the RoS placed on some career courses as this de-incentivises personnel from attending them and advancing. Due to the level of uncertainty that Service Personnel feel about their future in the Royal Navy, some are unwilling to commit for the defined period attached to these courses. This subsequently impacts watchbills and by extension, the sea/shore ratio.

Pay, Pension, Allowances and Benefits

[REDACTED]

The above statement may seem obvious however personnel clearly think that not enough is being done to support and retain both them and their families. [REDACTED] is in a somewhat unique position, having recently [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Whilst personnel are realistic about what the Royal Navy can afford, they do feel some lessons can be learned.

There are also other factors that influence the opinions of Service personnel on pay. Generally participants felt that they were not paid enough for the sacrifices they make in being at sea. Another key point that was remarked upon by a number of participants was the lack of a real term pay rise to meet inflation. The standard 1% pay rise is always accompanied by an increase in accommodation or meal costs. Placed alongside the higher pay rises of politicians, the negative impact on morale is clear.

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Recommendations

- a. Incentivise personnel to go to sea and reward them accordingly by some kind of financial bonus e.g. not taxing them for the duration of their sea time.
- b. In civilian employment, conducting of a busy 24hr duty would be compensated by an additional rate of pay or leave. Investigations should be conducted to see if such a scheme is feasible.
- c. [REDACTED]
- d. Travel warrants are given to personnel as an entitlement for being assigned to sea going units, however a number of these are taken away at the end of the year if personnel have not used them. Given the operational tempo of the Submarine Service, personnel rarely have the chance to use them all. It is recommended that no travel warrants are removed from sea going personnel at the end of the year.
- e. As mentioned elsewhere, the removal of [REDACTED] has had a noticeable impact on the number [REDACTED] who are looking to proceed to the [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
- f. As an amendment to NEM, separate all SM positions from their GS counterparts and place all SM personnel on Supplement Level 2. Given the additional knowledge required and responsibilities of SM personnel compared to their GS counterparts, it is felt that being paid the same basic wage is unfair.
- g. [REDACTED]

Recruitment and Retention Pay and Financial Retention Incentives

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
There was a general consensus that if FRIs are to be used, then more intelligent allocation and application is required.

RRP remains a welcome aspect of the pay packet of the Submariner, but the way it is allocated and the fact it is taken away from those who submit their notice is generally viewed negatively.

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Recommendations

- a. Consider the re-application of FRI payments to those in sea-going billets as an incentive to go to sea.
- b. Rebrand RRP as Specialist Pay for Submariners. It cannot be classed as payment for Recruitment or Retention when it requires a Professional Board to be eligible for it.
- c. Consider smaller payments over time similar to the standard commitment bonuses.
- d. Examine the feasibility and potential take up of non-monetary rewards, such as academic or vocational qualifications that are obtained over time served, with professional achievements being accredited by civilian organisations and educational institutes. E.g. A Junior Rate leaving after 6 years can be eligible for an NVQ in their trade, whilst a Senior Rate leaving after 22 years can be eligible for a undergraduate degree.
- e. Allow RRP to be pensionable.
- f. If FRIs have to be used, ensure that they are not taxed.

Fast Track Schemes



The common view of the new Fast Track schemes is negative, with participants citing concerns over safety, progression of non-selectees, loss of valuable experience and the potentially damaging impacts to the traditional manning structure of the Royal Navy. It is understood that measures need to be taken to address specific [REDACTED] and that in principle, the aims of the scheme are necessary. However, there is a feeling that the implementation of this programme could be improved.

Recommendations

- a. Selection of personnel for the Fast Track scheme should take place following successful completion of BSQ and be based on the recommendations of Submariners on the qualifying platform. Academic exams should be conducted but should not be the sole method of assessment.
- b. More regular tests, exams and practical assessments should be conducted on selectees to ensure they have earned the position and to reduce failure rates at the latter stages of the programme.
- c. A redress of selection quotas needs to take place to ensure that those who were not selected Fast Track initially have fair opportunity to access the scheme.
- d. The sudden ingress of Fast Tracks should not be so heavily prioritised above those personnel in the normal stream in terms of promotion and professional courses. Non-Fast Tracks are becoming rapidly demoralised by the stalling of their progression due to the back log of Fast Tracks taking all available course places.

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Recognition

Several personnel commented on the lack of recognition for their efforts in the Submarine Service, with a natural focus on [REDACTED] but also [REDACTED]. Although the [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] alongside the free Submariner T-Shirts that are unsuitable to be worn at sea. Personnel have outlined that the more established recognition for operations is a medal, whilst acknowledgement of their hardships could be made financially. In terms of appearance, the traditional wearing of white jumpers is perhaps seen as more popular for the Submariner and its wider use is encouraged.

Furthermore, participants commented on the decision to stop visitors to submarines in [REDACTED] remarking that this is short sighted. [REDACTED]

Recommendations

- a. Provide [REDACTED] personnel at sea with an extra supplement to account for the total isolation and lack of contact with loved ones.
- b. [REDACTED]
- c. Reverse the decision to [REDACTED]
- d. Amend BR3 regulations to permit the regular wearing of white Submariner jumpers within Naval Bases as part of the No.3 and No.4 uniforms. Every Submariner should be given a jumper on completion of their BSQ, along with their Dolphins.

Divisional System, Representation and the Submarine Service

Participant response regarding the Divisional System was overall positive, with a number noting how it had been used effectively to assist during compassionate, welfare and medical issues. This supports the view that local management on the submarine is working for the Ship's Company. Examples were cited such as the Command pushing for personnel to take as much as leave as possible.

Personnel did remark that feedback from previous surveys has generally been poor and they have not felt that their views were honestly presented. They have suggested that the work of organisations like [REDACTED] be promulgated through periodic, formal briefs so that personnel can query, challenge and provide inputs in an open forum.

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When questioned about their feelings on representation, a group of participants observed that the ability of the Royal Navy to portray itself well in the media is sporadic. Good examples such as Commando School were highlighted, whilst documentaries such as Royal Navy School were branded embarrassing. These personnel also remarked on how the Submarine Service is viewed in the media, with the generally negative overtones not being countered by the Royal Navy.

Finally, a small percentage of participants noted that the Navy is becoming increasingly reliant on charities such as RNRMC to provide welfare services and improvements for personnel and their families. In particular, simple upgrades to entertainment equipment in Messes or support to social events should be supported more regularly by Navy Command and not through private charity. Whilst these contributions are highly valuable, the participants noted that it calls into question the ability of the Royal Navy to effectively look after its own personnel.

Recommendations

- a. Encourage more use of Leading Hands within the Divisional System to make it more approachable for young ABs.
- b. Increase responsibility and empower Jun or Rates further so that they feel valued in their working environment.
- c. Hold regular Town Hall briefs in Faslane and Devonport to outline the work of FPSO in coordinating SSMP, ISCM and SMTC and the progress of these bodies, as well as regular reviews to assess the value of their work.
- d. Provide open, honest feedback to attitude surveys and questionnaires and what actions are being considered or taken.
- e. Reinstate duty travel for personnel attending Submarine Remembrance and other national events.
- f. The Royal Navy should look to be more defensive of its personnel in the public realm and adopt a more proactive and positive media strategy.
- g. Decrease the reliance on Service charities for personnel welfare.

Whilst a number of personnel have mentioned the lack of recognition for their commitment and hard work being an issue, [REDACTED] is not the solution. It is understood that there is a requirement [REDACTED] however there is wide-ranging sense of frustration with [REDACTED]

Recommendations

- a. [REDACTED]

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- b. [REDACTED]
- c. [REDACTED]
- d. [REDACTED]
- e. [REDACTED]

Accommodation

Throughout the survey, the subject of accommodation was brought up continuously, primarily on the subject of Junior Rates accommodation within [REDACTED] Delays to the [REDACTED] build schedule have meant [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The majority of personnel are in dual-occupancy cabins with bunk beds, shared bathrooms and ineffective support and maintenance from the Estates organisation of [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

There have been frequent examples of the [REDACTED] lacking hot water and heating over a weekend, with the occupants being told Boiler maintenance was being conducted. The Junior Rates have subsequently visited the Boiler locations to find that no work was being carried out.

Although the submarine has been promised accommodation within the new [REDACTED] by [REDACTED] the delivery date by DIO has slipped continuously right with no punitive action against the contractor being seen. Many personnel commented on the desire to have accommodation tribalised for Ship's Company and it is understood that this is [REDACTED] ambition.

Remarks were also made regarding unmarried personnel having to pay for SLA if they have a home away from the base and also the quality of SFA in the [REDACTED] area.

Recommendations

- a. [REDACTED]
- b. The [REDACTED] policy of tribalising Ship's Companies should continue with a Leading Hand being responsible for [REDACTED]

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- c. Once tribalisation has been completed for a Ship's Company, every effort should be made, including RNRMC Funding, to outfit the communal areas of SLA Blocks to make them specific to that unit e.g. Unit Crests, Televisions and Gaming facilities.
- d. Continue studies into allowing cooking [redacted]
- e. In the modern day, it is suggested that it is no longer acceptable for married personnel to automatically have free SLA. Personnel might not be married but still financially maintain a property either by themselves or with a partner, so the justification for married personnel not to be charged is no longer extant. Either married personnel should be charged for SLA or personnel who can prove they financially maintain a property, as per GYH(T), are exempt from charges.
- f. Improve the ability for SFA inhabitants to directly engage with the housing support contractor by having an established support office within [redacted]

Submarine Centre of Specialisation

[redacted]

As stated in the previous Annex, a sizeable fraction of the Ship's Company of [redacted] are from the [redacted] However, Ship's Company live all over the UK and the overall opinion of SMCoS is poor, with concerns highlighted over short and long term planning.

Recommendations

- a. More comprehensive briefs need to be given to Service personnel on the detailed planning of SMCoS. This should include infrastructure planning, funding routes and timelines as an absolute minimum. In a Naval Base where accommodation, car parking, mess capacity etc. are at a premium, announcing an increase of almost 2,000 personnel without any additional amenities creates uncertainty.
- b. The issue of Scottish Independence is a critical aspect of personnel not wanting to relocate their families and lives to the area near Faslane. The Service appears to be burying its head in the sand and hoping for the best. If personnel are to commit to SMCoS, a firm declaration of intent or course of action by both the Naval Service and the UK Government should be promulgated.
- c. Ensuring that briefings occur at the most suitable time for the right audience is essential. Personnel have commented on the fact that on the rare occasions that briefs are given, these are often at inconvenient times or the duration is such that they cannot attend around duties and daily tasks. One individual cited an example of an SMCoS Brief given in Devonport which began at 030 but the level of content was such that it did not finish until beyond 1300, by which point all the attendees had become annoyed as they had missed lunch. Simple mistakes like this impact heavily on the ability to sell SMCoS to Service personnel.
- d. The setting of active examples by Senior personnel involved in SMCoS is a point that should be actioned to promote faith in the planned changes. A considerable number of

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Ship's Company fly via [REDACTED] Airport to travel home for the weekend when the submarine is alongside and many have noticed that Senior Officers involved in the planning of [REDACTED] do not live locally to the base and choose to travel home. Service personnel have remarked that they can hardly be expected to move their lives to [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Submarine Operations

Recommendations

- a. [REDACTED]
- b. [REDACTED]
- c. Consider the reintroduction of conventionally-powered submarines into the Royal Navy. This would allow the Submarine Service to increase the scale and type of operations conducted, boost the availability of platforms due to the more simplistic maintenance, provide assignments for personnel that allow greater family time and more responsibility at a lower rank/rate and offer the Submarine Service a greater opportunity to engage with the public through more port visits.

Operational Support

Shore support was a key theme throughout the survey, with many members of the Ship's Company feeling that they end up having to jump through hoops for inboard organisations, rather than receiving the support they need to meet sailing dates. Whilst some of the issues are complex, others felt that relatively easy actions could make life significantly better.

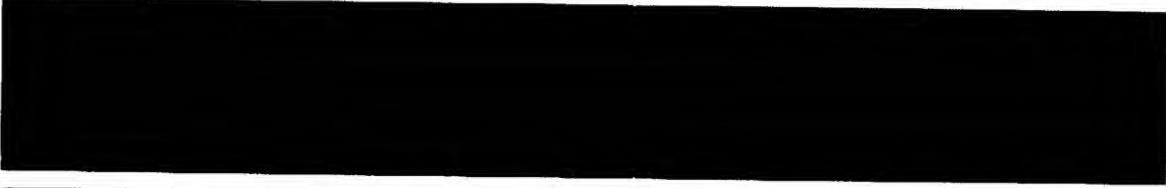
Recommendations

- a. Provide a dedicated manpower support pool during [REDACTED]
- b. Increase the DMR for food onboard, allowing Royal Navy Chefs to produce a healthier and more varied menu with higher quality ingredients.

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- c. Examine the feasibility of using private cleaners or contractors to remove refuse from the submarine upon returning alongside and conducting a deep clean.
- d. Increase the allowance for the purchase of onboard physical training equipment.
- e. Increase the capabilities and remit of the Supply Ops organisation to enable more effective use of the Supply Chain system to support submarines, taking some of the burden away from Ship's Company.

Contracts



Recommendations

- a. Engineering Officers and Warrant Officers are given formal training in Project and Contract Management to improve the level of accountability presented to contractors during maintenance periods.
- b. Logistics Officers are given formal training in Contract Management and offered the opportunity to be Commercial Officers for support contracts. This will allow the Royal Navy to manage, oversee, review and amend contracts more effectively, whilst also giving the ability to [REDACTED]
- c. To combat the lack of accountability after contracts are made, signatories and those who have had a major input into the development of a contract should be kept in post for a minimum of 3 years whilst the effectiveness of the contract is measured.
- d. Contract signatories and those who have had a major input into the development of a contract, worth over a set value, should not be permitted to work for any contracted organisation for 5 years after signing.
- e. The Royal Navy should continue efforts to regain shore billets from contractors to address the sea/shore balance and restore sustainable manning. This is already happening in some areas such as Catering and could be expanded to other support facets such as Cranage, Specialist Repair and Training posts.

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f.

Training

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Recommendations

a.

[REDACTED]

b.

[REDACTED]

c.

[REDACTED]

d.

[REDACTED]

Reporting to the Command Hierarchy

[REDACTED]

One area highlighted by survey participants as problematic was the reporting of issues to the higher levels of Command. This was one of the noticeable factors towards personnel being reluctant to take part in the survey, as it was felt that questionnaires were issued so Command was seen to be going through the motions of listening to personnel, rather than actually doing so.

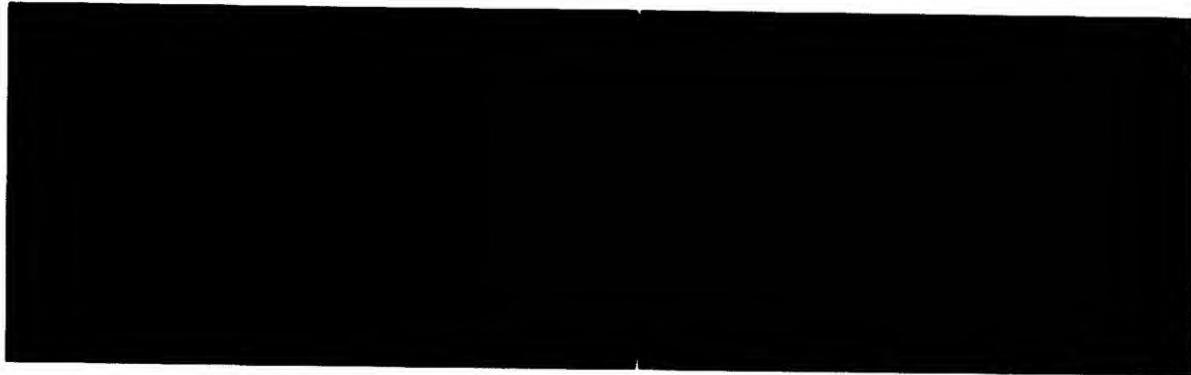
There is a perception that the flow of information into the higher levels of the hierarchy is limited by organisations such as [REDACTED]. Many participants consider these organisations to be composed of 'Yes Men and Women' who put spin on feedback rather than reporting honestly on the state of affairs on the front line.

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Recommendations

- a. More comprehensive feedback on CAS and other surveys should be given to Service Personnel and their families.
- b. Encourage reporting to be centred around honesty and integrity, to provide more accurate and useful information on the present state of platforms and personnel.

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